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DEMOCRATIC BANNER.

"UNITED WE STAND—DIVIDED WE FALL."

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(Written for the South Missourian.)

A TALE OF MISSOURI.

It is interesting when we behold the man of universal renown—to know something of his early infancy—his buoyant youth, his rapid career of fame. It is interesting when we see the magestic river rolling on in silent grandeur—to contemplate its source in the little sparkling spring that bubbles up amid the mountains. And so, it is interesting to contemplate the infancy of that spacious city which is kinsman to the world, and bears an important relation to the interests of a mighty empire. But if the man of fame be our kindred—if the rolling river be that on whose banks we spent the sunny hours of infancy, and joined in the merry sports of childhood—if the city be the one in which we drew our first breath, saw our happiest days, smiled on those we love, and wept beneath the moonbeams o'er the graves of buried friends—then, whatever relates to their early history acts as a spell to interest and rivet our attention. St. Louis, fifty years ago, [then called by a name which signifies Lightbread,] was a small village inhabited by French. There was then but one church in the town, and that was nothing better than a rude log hut. On a tree before the church door was hung a rather small bell, which was rung every Sabbath morning to call the scattered worshippers to the sanctuary.

On an eminence overlooking the city—where now stands a Presbyterian Church, dwelt a man from New England, whose name was Woodson. His was the only American family then living in the place. Bold and enterprising, he had left the home of his childhood—the land of light and freedom—had pressed on with his wife and two babes, 'till he had pierced the dark and distant western wilds—had settled on that rising ground adjacent to the town now called St. Louis. Though far from home, from friends, from religious privileges, from ten thousand comforts, they still were happy—they feared God—they were Christians. Their children, growing up in health and beauty, gladdened their hearts. Their farm improved—their wealth increased—peace was enshrined within their humble cot.

It was a beautiful spring morning, the last star still twinkling in the vivid sky. The horizon was clad in rich radiant clouds and all was calm and bright, as the waking spirit of Woodson sent up, with the early lark, his thanks to Heaven for paternal protection. He left the House, his wife still wrapt in slumber, and seeing a large grey eagle in mid-air, resting proudly on his pinions, and ready to pounce upon his prey, he returned for his gun, which was loaded—went some paces from the house, fired at the eagle, but missed. The king of birds, affrighted, fled, and was out of sight in an instant. Woodson somewhat disappointed at his failure, stood leaning on his gun, trying to conjecture what had attracted the eagle's attention, when suddenly he heard the footsteps and conversation of three Frenchmen, coming at a brisk walk up the road. Woodson moved slowly towards his house to return his gun, when he was hailed in broken English, by one of the three individuals: "Monsier, what you kill?" "Nothing, sir, replied Woodson." "Vell den, vat you shoot at, Monsier?" "I shot at an eagle, sir,' said Woodson, 'but missed.' "Veli,' said the Frenchman, 'dat is good, shoot an eagle, and me see him not at all—shoot at an eagle and miss him! Vell!' Woodson made no answer, but returned to the house, and the Frenchmen passed on.

The sun had marched up the blue sky, and now sat enthroned in meridian majesty and splendour. Woodson, with a happy heart was following his plow, when with considerable astonishment he saw a number of men leap his fence and make towards the place where he was at work. Hailing Woodson, they commanded him to follow, and soon the company stood near the spot where Woodson had fired at the eagle.—Every eye was fixed on Woodson, as with trembling horror he gazed on the bleeding body of a murdered man, recently shot thro' the brain by a musket ball, and deposited in a deep gully near his gate.—Woodson, whose heart was ever sensitive, was chilled with the horrid sight before him; but when he saw by their revengeful looks and their allusions to his firing at the eagle in the morning, that suspicion had fallen upon him—that he must be branded with the name of murderer, and bear the vengeance of men that ever hated him—when these thoughts, like a confluence of Alpine torrents, flowed in upon his soul—he trembled—he uttered a groan—he fell powerless to the ground.

Close to the river, in that part of the city now occupied by business houses of every size and description, stood a house built of huge rough rocks, with grated windows and heavy bolted doors; recognized at once as a dark and dreary Spanish prison. The evening shadows had gathered over the village. The night advanced in dark and dreadful majesty, now bellowing forth its threatening thunder, now scattering thro' the vast expanse the gleams of lurid lightning. And there, within that dreary prison, pale, cold and sorrowful, sat Woodson, endeavoring to trust to his innocence and his God, as his safe-guards; yet fearing the injustice and malice of his foes. "But what have I to fear? suspicion is not guilt; and to-morrow the case will be tried, and all will be well." He bowed before his Father, committed his all into His hand, and with Hope beaming on his heart—hope that shines out brightest 'mid the darkest scenes of earthly sorrow—he stretched himself upon the cold damp ground, and was soon wrapt in slumber.

The morn again appeared. The winds were hushed—the sky was clear, and the sun, rising gloriously up the blue heavens, was followed by a bright train of golden clouds. Woodson, awaking from his slumber, felt chilled and comfortless. The thoughts of home, his wife, his children, the prison-walls, the dangers before him, all rose in horrid array, like dread spectres, before his mind. But again he bowed before his God—his spirit was calmed—he felt conscious that He would ever befriend him.

It was ten o'clock when Woodson was brought into the hall of the Commandant's house to undergo his trial. A crowd was already assembled and was growing more numerous every moment. At length the Commandant, a dark-visaged, heavy set man, entered and took his seat in a large arm-chair, at the upper end of the hall. The trial was commenced; Woodson was asked in a solemn manner, to confess the murder of the man whose body was found near his gate. In an equally solemn and decided tone, Woodson denied having ever injured or even seen the person in question, until the fatal morning when his bleeding corpse was exposed to public gaze.—The witnesses were then called forward and sworn on the cross by the priest. Two of them testified that, on the morning of the murder, just before sunrise, while going towards Woodson's house, they heard the report of a gun. That coming up to Woodson, they asked him at what he had fired, that he answered, as they thought, with embarassment, 'at an eagle.' They stated the improbability of his story; for, had an eagle been there, they must have seen it; and that it was almost impossible that Woodson—a good marksman—could fire at it and miss it. Other witnesses testified to the agitation that shook Woodson's frame, when he looked at the corps—a circumstance that went far to prove his guilt.

The witnesses examined, the commandant addressed the prisoner as follows: "You see that we have the plainest proof that you are guilty of imbruing your hands in the blood of your fellow-man—a crime which calls for the vengeance both of Heaven and of earth, and must be punished with almost instant death. But before your doom is pronounced, we wish to hear what you have to say concerning this horrid charge preferred and proven against you."

Woodson arose and calmly replied. "I own that circumstances look suspicious, and though I fear that prejudice and hatred would invent falsehoods to convict me, yet what the witness testified did really occur. Yet here, before him, who, should your sentence be carried out, must soon be my judge, I solemly declare that I am innocent! GREAT GOD, protect me! All that I ask is that you put off my execution a few months, believing as I do, that time will throw some light on this dark and bloody transaction. I am in a strange land, said the prisoner, "far from friends and counsel. I stand helpless and alone. I throw myself on your mercy. The only boon I ask is that you will not put the sentence of the law into immediate execution." While Woodson was speaking, the commandant had some conversation with the priest. They thought from his language that he entertained some hope that his friends would effect his escape. The priest arose and addressing Woodson, said: "Your lonely and desolate situation is heart-rending indeed. [At these words, the prisoner, for the first time during his trial, burst forth into a flood of tears.] You are not distant from your friends, but far from the true and apostolic church, out of whose pale none can be saved. If it were to renounce your errors, embrace the true faith, and do something to merit Heaven, that you asked for your execution to be put off, in pity to your soul it ought to be granted. Tell me my son, do you ask instruction in the Catholic faith?" "My faith, replied the prisoner, is fixed of God and cannot be shaken. On this subject I am fearless. A respite of a few weeks, or even days, I ask no more." A dark frown gatherd on the countenance of the priest, which seemed reflected in that of the commandant, who rising said, "Prisoner; to-morrow you must die."

The despairing shriek of a female was heard; and rushing through the crowd, the wife of Woodson fainted in his arms. The sun was sinking in the west, and the silvery clouds were gathering round him, like children round a dying sire.

Woodson was sitting on a log within the prison with the priest already mentioned by his side. "My son, make your confession," said the priest. "I have repeatedly told you that I was innocent,' said the prisoner, "do not press this subject, father." "But you can confess to me your other sins—surely you are not sinless?' "Had I ever injured you, most truely I would confess and ask your pardon.—Against God have I sinned, His pardon, and his only do I crave.—Leave me! beseech you; you but add to the bitterness of my afflictions,' and the priest, then, a few more fruitless efforts to convince him, left him alone to his sorrow.

'Twas after midnight. The morn was fast approaching. By the dim light of the prison lamp could Woodson be seen, with his wife and children beside him in tears. They wept—they prayed—they tried to hope. 'ETERNAL GOD,' said Woodson, rising, thy ways are misterious. Blackest clouds hang over me—darkness impossible to pierce. Oh, Heavens! Mercy! GOD bless my wife—my children—thy will be done." When these words were uttered he felt more composed; and embracing his wife, he said: dearest, trust in GOD. Look up—Heaven itself is near us—soon we'll meet; there we'll be happy—we'll part no more. Try then to submit.' 'Give you up!' said his wife; oh! I cannot! GOD does not forget us—some help will yet come!' Bathed in tears, with the children trembling with agony and clinging to their father's knees, they gave way to silent grief.

And yet it was not the silence of despair; though scathed by the lightning of misfortune—and stript of earthly friends and earthly hopes, and left to wither in withanguish with none to pity. Though death in the most appaling aspect, steadily advanced, and soon would sever ties the most tender, and stamp with ignominy the orphan children of an innocent man; yet there was a bright gleam of hope from Heaven piercing those prison walls; telling that sad and silent group, of God, of Heaven, of that Eternal shore, where all is cloudless light and perfect peace.

The air was damp and chilling. The dying lamp, whose sickly light was nearly exhausted, seemed to fill up the picture of distress. The prison door was opened, and, unheeded by Woodson or his family, several persons entered. "Woodson said the officer. The prisoner started to his feet, and supposing they had come to lead him to execution, said "has the hour arrived?" His wife aroused by these words from the frozen deadness in which her anguish had wrapt her, now uttered a piteous shriek and again fainted. The children though as determined to save him, clung to their father's knees, while their countenances were marked with despair. Woodson—but how can those scenes be described. He kissed his lovely wife, and laid her on the ground. He pressed his children to his heart, and gave them a father's parting blessing. Then turning to the men who had entered, he said; "Gentlemen I am ready." There was a pause—a heartrending silence. It was broken by the voice of the commandant who by this time had entered, and taking Woodson by the hand said, you are innocent That man has confessed the murder—you are free.' "Eternal God I thank Thee," said Woodson falling on his knees. His wife, who in her returning consciousness, heard the words 'you are free,' again rushed into his arms, and with joy again was overcome. The storm has hushed—the clouds were gone, and Heaven's all cheering smile again lit up its heart!

The sequel unfolded the following facts.—That the murder was committed through domestic jealousy that the body was left at Woodson's gate, that suspicion might fall on him—that the power of conscience impelled the murderer to confess the crime; and finally, that capital punishment is often visited on the innocent. P.

THE BROKEN HEARTED.

BY GEO. D. PRENTICE.

I have seen the infant sinking down, like a stricken flower, to the grave—the strong man fiercely breathing out his soul upon the field of battle—the miserable convict standing upon the scaffold, with a deep curse quivering on his lips—I have viewed death in all his forms of darkness and vengeance with a tearless eye—but I never could look on woman, young and lovely woman, fading away from earth in beautiful and uncomplaining melancholy, without feeling the very fountains of life turned to tears and dust. Death is always terrible, but when a form of angel beauty is passing off to the silent land of the sleepers, the heart feels that something lovely in the universe is ceasing from existence, and broods, with a sense of utter desolation, over the lovely thoughts that come up like spectres from the grave to haunt our midnight musings.

Two years ago I took up my residence for a few weeks in a country village in the eastern part of New England. Soon after my arrival I became acquainted with a lovely girl, apparently about seventeen years of age. She had lost the idol of her pure heart's purest love, and the shadows of deep and holy memories were resting like the wing of death upon her brow. I first met her in the presence of the mirthful. She was indeed a creature to be worshipped; her brow was garlanded with the young year's sweetest flowers; her golden locks were hanging beautifully and low upon her bosom; and she moved through the crowd with such a floating and unearthly grace, that the bewildered gazer almost looked to see her fade into the air, like the creation of some pleasant dream. She seemed cheerful and even gay; yet I saw that her gaiety was but the mockery of her feelings. She smiled, but there was something in her smile which told that its mournful beauty was but the bright reflection of a tear; and her eye lids, at times, closed heavily down, as if struggling to repress the tide of agony that was bursting from her heart's secret urn. She looked as if she could have left the scene of festivity, and gone out beneath the quiet stars, and laid her forehead down upon the fresh, green earth, and poured out her stricken soul, gush after gush, till it mingled with the eternal fountain of life and purity.

Days and weeks passed on, and that sweet girl gave me her confidence, and I became to her as a brother. She was wasting away by disease. The smile upon her lip was fainter, the purple veins upon her cheek grew visible, and the cadences of her voice became daily more weak and tremulous. On a quiet evening in the depth of June, I wandered out a little distance in the open air. It was then that she first told me the tale of her passion, and of the blight that had come down like a mildew upon her life. Love had been a portion of her existence. Its tendrils had been twined around her heart in her earliest years; and, when they were rent away, they left a wound which flowed till all the springs of her soul were blood. "I am passing away," said she, "and it should be so. The winds have gone over my life, and the bright buds of hope and the sweet blossoms of passion are scattered down, and lie withering in the dust, or rotting away upon the chill waters of memory.—And yet I cannot go down among the tombs without a tear. It is hard to take leave of the friends who love me; it is very hard to bid farewell to those dear scenes, which, from day to day, have caught the color of my life, and sympathised with its sorrows and joys. That little grove where I have so often strayed with my buried love, and where, at times, even now, the sweet tones of his voice seem to come stealing around me till the whole air becomes one intense and mournful melody; that pensive star, which we used to watch in its early rising, and on which my fancy can still picture his form looking down upon me, beckoning me to his own bright home; every flower, and tree, and rivulet, on which the memory of our early love has set its undying seal, have become dear to me, and I cannot, without a sigh, close my eyes upon them forever."

I have lately heard that the beautiful girl of whom I have spoken, is dead. The close of her life was calm as the falling of a quiet stream; gentle as the sinking of the breeze, that lingers for a time around a bed of withered roses, and then dies "as it were from very sweetness."

It cannot be that earth is man's abiding place. It cannot be that our life is a bubble cast up by the Ocean of Eternity, to float a moment upon its waves, and sink into darkness and nothingness. Else why is it that the high and glorious aspirations which leap like angels from the temple of our hearts, are forever wandering abroad unsatisfied? Why is it that the rainbow and the cloud come over us with a beauty that is not of earth, and then pass off and leave us to muse upon their loveliness?—Why is it that the stars which "hold their festivals around the midnight throne," are set above the grasp of our limited faculties,—forever mocking us with their unapproachable glory? And finally, why is it that bright forms of human beauty are presented to our view and then taken from us, leaving the ten thousand streams of our affections to flow back in an Alpine torrent upon our hearts? We are born for a higher destiny than that of earth. There is a realm where the rainbow never fades, where the stars will be spread out before us like the islands that slumber on the ocean—and where the beautiful beings, which here pass before us like visions, will stay in our presence forever. Bright creature of my dreams! in that realm I shall see thee again. Even now thy lost image is sometimes with me. In the mysterious silence of midnight, when the streams are glowing in the light of the many stars, that image comes floating upon the beam that lingers around my pillow, and stands before me in its pale, dim loveliness, till its own spirit sinks like a spell from Heaven upon my thoughts, and the grief of years is turned to dreams of blessedness and peace.

SANTA ANNA'S FLOCK—*A supply for the Army.*—The writer in Blackwood's September number on Mexico says a large portion of the country between Vera Cruz and the city of Mexico belongs to the well known Gen. Sant Anna. The soil of his vast estate is fertile—the General being a shepherd, & said to have from 40 to 50,000 head of cattle in his pastures. Should the government quarter the army on him for a while, would it not greatly expedite their efforts to "conquer a peace?"

JUDICIAL DIGNITY.—The following conversation is said to have passed between a vernable old lady and a certain presiding judge of ——. This learned functionary was supported on his right and left by his worthy associates, when Mrs. P. was called to give evidence.

'Take off your bonnet, madam'

'I had rather not, sir.'

'Rounds and brimstone, madam, take off your bonnet, I say.'

'In public assembles, sir, women generally cover their heads. Such, I am sure, is the custom elsewhere, and therefore, I will not take off my bonnet.'

'Do you hear that gentlemen? She pretends to know more about these matters than the judge himself! Had you not better come and take a seat on the bench?'

'No, sir. I thank you, for I really think there are old women enough there already.'

SCENE IN A WESTERN OFFICE.

Enter a tall, eager fellow—lean and hungry-looking, as though he could eat a regiment of Mexicans for his supper.

"I want an exter, Mr. Clerk."

"None issued—no news," said that dignitary.

"No news! scissors! didn't a fellow down on the wharf tell me Monterzuma was took."